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ABSTRACT

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education has the statutory responsibility for the overall statewide planning and coordination of higher education in Alabama, the administration of various student aid programs, and the performance of designated regulatory functions. This annual report provides information about all of these responsibilities and some initiatives. Some of the higher education initiatives achieved during this fiscal year were continued funding for the Alabama Virtual Library and Alabama's ranking as number one among southern states in minority doctoral scholarships. Three of four mandated reports from the state's student database have been generated: the high school report card, the transfer migration report, and the tuition residency report. Retention graduation data are being gathered over a 6-year period, and the report is scheduled for 2004. Data collection for the Faculty Database is ongoing. Workforce development and the link between education and industry continue to be main objectives of the Alabama Higher Education Commission. This annual report includes: (1) photographs of the commissioners; (2) a message from the chairman; (3) highlights of legislative activity; (4) highlights of academic activity; (5) a report on activities of the Southern Regional Education Board and its electronic campus; (6) an overview of the commission; and (7) highlights of the financial aid activities. (SLD)

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ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 1, 1999 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2000

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1999-2000 Annual Report
Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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Gadsden

Message from the Chairman

As chairman of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, I am pleased to transmit to Governor Siegelman and to the Alabama Legislature the 1999-2000 annual report.

The Commission on Higher Education has the statutory responsibility for the overall statewide planning and coordination of higher education in Alabama, the administration of various student aid programs, and the performance of designated regulatory functions. Some of the more noteworthy of the Commission's statutory responsibilities include the approval of new academic programs at public two-year and four-year institutions, the submission each year of a funding recommendation to the Governor and the Legislature on behalf of the public higher education institutions, and the approval of off-campus offerings of public two-year and four-year institutions.

Some higher education initiatives achieved during this fiscal year were continued funding for the Alabama Virtual Library and Alabama's ranking as number one among southern states in minority doctoral scholarships.

Three of the four reports from the Student Database have been generated. They are the high school report card, transfer migration and tuition residency. The retention graduation data is being gathered over a six-year period. That report is scheduled for completion in 2004. The Commission has gathered one million student records for reporting purposes.

Data is continuing to be collected for the Faculty Database. The goal of the pilot collection is to have unit record data ready for testing by June 2001.

We look forward to working with Governor Siegelman, the members of the Legislature, the institutions and Alabama citizens to ensure our state's growth in the field of education.

Fournier J. "Boots" Gale

Report from the Executive Director

Through carrying out the statutory responsibilities of approval for new units of instruction, new program approval, and the review of off-campus offerings, the Commission again promotes efficiency, accountability and effectiveness. This report will provide details of these and other activities in higher education.

Fiscal year 1999-2000 saw many advances made in higher education, much due to the second straight year of additional funding by the Alabama Legislature. We are grateful to the Legislature for their cooperation and support of the Unified Budget Recommendation.

Workforce development and the link between education and industry are continuing to be main objectives. The Commission has been actively engaged in the Information Technology Committee (ITC) for the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce. The ITC, composed of representatives from K-12, higher education, military, business and industry, is working with the Chamber to recruit technology companies to Alabama. The committee promotes a "K to Gray" approach to encourage students to consider a career in technology and to stay in Alabama after they graduate. Another goal is to encourage institutions to collaborate with local businesses to provide students the technical training they need to fill technical positions around the area.

The Student Assistance Initiated Loan Servicing Department *(SAILS)* originates and services federally guaranteed student loans pursuant to the requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. During the past year South Trust Bank made the decision to transfer its student loan portfolio to a private corporation for loan servicing because of financial incentives available from the private corporation. The *SAILS* Department does not receive any state appropriations. All expenses of the department are paid from fees generated from servicing student loans. With the loss of approximately 50% of its income through the South Trust conversion, ACHE has restructured the *SAILS* Department by reducing the number of employees from 22 to 12. Reducing approximately 3,180 square feet of rental space in the RSA Union Building is making other costs reductions. ACHE staff are continuing to solicit additional lenders to service while simultaneously cutting cost of the servicing operation.

Henry J. Hector

Efforts are ongoing to improve access to postsecondary education in Alabama. A task force including representatives from the Alabama College System, ACHE and other educational segments have been developing ways to offer courses creditable to the last two years of selected baccalaureate degree programs, and possibly some courses in selected graduate degree programs. These would be offered at university centers on the campuses of community colleges and would enhance geographic access to upper division education in the state in an effort to help meet the statewide need for certain specialized training.

The greatest advantage to all of public higher education is the cost savings from the wise utilization of resources and effective collaboration. Through the greater use of existing facilities, the diminished need for the construction of new buildings and the consequent elimination of operation and maintenance costs, as well as through the increased use of existing well-qualified faculty in dual roles, the sites for university centers could be a model for further broadening access to higher education. During the past fiscal year The University of Alabama began offering baccalaureate level nursing at Alabama Southern Community College in Monroeville.

The dropout rate is indicating that many students who enter our colleges and universities are not academically prepared for college level education. A high percentage of students find it necessary to take developmental or remedial studies, and many of them drop out before graduating. Studies indicate the more remedial courses a student finds it necessary to take; the less likely she/he is to ever attain a baccalaureate degree. The Commission will continue to explore additional avenues to decrease the postsecondary dropout rate and assure Alabama of a more educated work force.

One final note reveals Alabama's low ranking in the nation of states providing assistance to students pursuing higher education in the state. State spending on need-based student aid for 1999-2000 was over $200,000 less than the previous fiscal year.

Highlights of
Legislative Activity

FY 2000-2001 Education Trust Fund

Act 2000-594, the Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget bill was signed into Law by Governor Don Seigelman to fund FY 2000-2001 appropriations. This act along with other ETF budget allocations appropriated more than $4.3 billion.

FY 2000-2001 Funding for Higher Education

Higher Education's share of the Education Trust Fund amounted to $1,159,193,334 or 26.9 percent. K-12 received 68.7 percent of the ETF and allocations for other entities accounted for the remaining 4.4 percent.

Senior Institutions received an overall increase of 5.96 percent while the two year institutions received an 8.73 percent increase. Dollar amounts of the increase in ETF for FY 2001 are as follows: Senior Institutions-$47,537,945 and Two-Year College System-$18,377,679.

FY 1999-2000 Funding for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education received an increase of $130,000 in the FY 2000-2001 Education Trust Fund bill. However, the unfunded mandated 2% pay raise for state employees and the increase in the employee health care costs limited the funds available for daily operations.

Only three of the programs ACHE administers were given any increases in funding. The Student Assistance Program received an additional $25,000 to match new federal funds. Southern Regional Education Board received an additional $136,000 to increase the number of minority doctoral scholarships. The Alabama Educational Grant Program received an additional $300,000 for student tuition equalization grants.

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Highlights of Academic Activity

New Academic Programs in Senior Institutions

The following new academic programs were approved during fiscal year 1999-2000:

Auburn University	M.T.P.C. in Technical & Professional Communication
Jacksonville State University	M.S. in Systems & Software Design B.S. in Information Management/e-commerce
University of Alabama at Birmingham	B.A. in African American Studies
University of South Alabama	M.S. in Occupational Therapy B.S.B.A. in Electronic Commerce

New Academic Programs in Two-Year Institutions

The following two-year programs were approved during fiscal year 1999-2000:

Ayers State Technical College	Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Child Development Certificate in Communications Electronics
Bevill State Community College	Certificate in Surgical Operating Room Technology Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Child Development
Bishop State Community College	Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Manufacturing Technology Associate in Occupational Technologies Degree (Electrical Technology/Air Conditioning and Refrigeration)

Calhoun Community College	Associate in Applied Science in Child Development Associate in Applied Science in Aerospace Technology
Faulkner State Community College	Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Surgical Operating Room Technology
Gadsden State Community College	Certificate in Court Reporting
Northeast Alabama Community College	Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Industrial Electronics Technology Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Drafting and Design Technology Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Emergency Medical Services
Northwest-Shoals Community College	Associate in Applied Science in Child Development
Reid State Technical College	Associate in Applied Science in Child Development
Southern Union State Community College	Associate in Applied Science and Certificate in Child Development
Trenholm State Technical College	Associate in Applied Technology and Certificate in Child Development Certificate in Dental Laboratory Technology
Wallace State Community College (Hanceville)	Associate in Applied Science in Fire Science

Program Viability

In May 1996, the Alabama Legislature adopted a series of bills related to higher education. Act 96-557 became known as the "program viability" legislation because it set minimum standards of productivity each academic program had to meet or be placed on a three-year monitoring cycle. According to the law, if a non-viable program does not meet the standard at the end of the three-year monitoring period, the institution will either submit a waiver request to the Commission or place the program on a maximum three-year phase-out. If a waiver request is not approved by the Commission, the non-viable program will be phased out over a maximum three-year period. As part of its rule making authority, the Commission also elected to allow core liberal arts programs an extra three years to meet the viability standards, with the full expectation that creative and innovative strategies would be implemented to enable those programs to meet the standards. In April 1999, the Alabama legislature amended the program viability legislation with the adoption of Act 2000-409. This

amendment allowed students who completed a 40 quarter hour or 26 semester hour certificate in a vocational/technical program to be counted as program graduates for viability purposes.

Even though the three-year process of monitoring non-viable programs is not yet complete, institutions have taken a serious look at their academic offerings with a focus on improving both the quality and productivity of programs. Between August 1997 and December 1999, for example, public institutions deleted 185 programs, consolidated 42 programs, merged 18 programs, and re-designed the curriculum and changed the award in the technical course linkage in two-year institutions, and made a number of curriculum changes. Additionally, institutions enhanced recruitment activities and implemented retention and resource strategies in many non-viable programs.

From October 1999-September 2000, Commission accomplishments related to program viability included:

- Received, edited, and reviewed the second-year monitoring data from the institutions on all non-viable programs.
- Published and distributed the second annual report on the status of non-viable programs to the Governor, members of the Alabama legislature, members of the State Board of Education, and the institutions.
- Reviewed the first reports on non-viable core liberal arts programs which summarized the strategies that had been implemented to improve the productivity of the programs. A summary of these reports was presented and made public.
- Adopted and distributed procedures, guidelines and instructions for the submission of 40 quarter hour/26 semester hour certificate completion data, to fulfill mandates of Act 2000-409, the amendment to the program viability legislation.
- Distributed a discussion paper and held meetings with institutional representatives to share ideas on what should be done with the remaining non-viable core liberal arts programs at the end of the three-year monitoring period. By the end of September 2000, the staff had developed a recommendation for Commission consideration that would hold core liberal arts programs to the same viability standards as all other academic programs. Final action on this recommendation is anticipated in December 2000.
- Appointed a committee of institutional representatives to make a recommendation on the process, time line, an ' criteria to be used in the review of institutional waiver requests. A final recommendation is expected from this group in December 2000.

Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research

The Alabama Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is a family of competitive, merit-based programs sponsored by the State and by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Cooperating partners in the Alabama EPSCoR include fifteen Alabama

colleges and universities, more than forty industrial, government, and federal laboratory partners, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). These programs form a Federal-State-Industrial partnership for the purpose of establishing an infrastructure within the state of Alabama capable of sustaining high-quality science and engineering research and education that contributes to statewide national competitiveness.

During FY 2000, more than 600 faculty, staff, and students from Alabama A&M University (AAMU), Auburn University (AU), the University of Alabama (UA), the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), Tuskegee University (TU), University of South Alabama (USA), Troy State University, Shelton State Community College, Alabama School of Math and Science (Mobile), Oakwood College, Samford University, Stillman College, University of Montevallo, University of North Alabama, Jacksonville State University, and Miles College participated in research grants totaling more than $8 million awarded by the Federal agencies referenced above.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has recognized the Alabama EPSCoR as one of the most outstanding programs of its kind in the United States in terms of total dollars awarded and in numbers of awards. A recent study by Quantum Research Corporation funded by NSF indicated that, over the life of the Alabama EPSCoR Program, the NSF investment of $13 million through 1996 has resulted in $56.1 million in non-EPSCoR awards to those same researchers from NSF, a 4.3 to 1 return.

In July, a 3-year $14.9 million Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) proposal was submitted to the NSF. If approved, the award will bring $9 million dollars of NSF funds along with $5.9 million of matching funds over three years to the State's institutions beginning in FY2001. These funds are targeted for the establishment of multi-campus "Centers of Excellence" and for extending the scope of research both nationally and internationally. Participating with the seven Ph.D. granting research universities will be Shelton State Community College, the Alabama School of Math and Science (Mobile) and Tuscaloosa County Schools. The RII proposal includes thirteen industrial partners from Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, New York and California as well as additional partnerships with NASA and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education administers grants authorized under the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program (PL 103-382). The intent of the program is to improve the teaching of core subjects, especially mathematics and science, in elementary and secondary schools.

Grants are awarded to post secondary institutions and non-profit organizations on a competitive basis for professional development projects offered to teachers to improve their teaching proficiency, reinforce their subject area knowledge and provide them with materials necessary to meet project objectives. The appropriation to the Commission in FY 1999 was $834,879.

Eight (8) projects were approved: Alabama Institute for Education in the Arts for a project by the same name; The University of Alabama for two (2) projects: AIntegrated Science@ and AQuantitative Literacy"; the University of Alabama at Birmingham for two (2) projects: "Hands-On Activity Science Program (HASP)" and the "Alabama Reading Initiative Evaluation@. The University of Alabama in Huntsville was the recipient of three (3) awards for the following projects: AAlabama Supercomputing Program to Inspire computational Research in Education (ASPIRE)@ , ATeaching the Future: Space Exploration and the Improvement of Science and Mathematics Education in Alabama Schools@ , and the "Alabama Classroom Enhancement Project (ACE)."

For information on the operational procedures of this program as well as the scope of funded projects, see the link to the Eisenhower Professional Development Program on the Commission's web site at http://www.ache.state.al.us .

Articulation and General Studies Committee

The Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) was established by Act 94-202 in March 1994. The primary goals of the legislation were: 1) to provide for a uniform articulation agreement among all institutions of higher education as well as a statewide general studies curriculum; 2) to provide for the computation of grade point averages of certain transferred students; 3) to specify that the Act would not impede the objectives of historically black institutions; 4) to provide for implementation conditioned on the participation of certain institutions; and 5) to specify certain reporting requirements.

To implement provisions specified in the Act, the legislation provided for the establishment of a ten-member Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC) that was charged with four objectives: 1) to develop a statewide general studies curriculum no later than

September 1, 1998; 2) to develop and adopt an articulation agreement by September 1, 1999 for the transfer of credit among all public institutions of higher education in Alabama; 3) to examine the need for a uniform course numbering system, course titles, and course descriptions; and 4) to resolve problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement of the general studies curriculum. Chair of the Committee is Dr. Rod Britt , Dean of the Academic Division of Southern Union State Community College. Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect is Dr. Michael Malone, President of Troy State University/Dothan. The Executive Director of the Commission serves as an ex-officio member of the Committee.

Major accomplishments to date include: 1) the adoption of a general studies curriculum (December 1995) that was implemented statewide for first time entering freshmen beginning with the Fall term in 1998, 2) the adoption of an articulation agreement and process for implementation (September 1999), and 3) the establishment of an organizational and procedural framework for resolving problems in the administration or interpretation of the articulation agreement. The Statewide Transfer and Articulation Reporting System (STARS) is a web-based data system that provides access to students, administrators, and the

general public information on the transfer/articulation process. For information on the AGSC including the legislation, minutes of AGSC meetings, committee structure and membership, course approval with submission deadlines, ratified templates, and policies, see the STARS web site at http://stars.troyst.edu

Non-Resident Institutional Review

The Commission is responsible for the programmatic review of private institutions operating as foreign corporations in Alabama. These institutions include post-secondary public and private, profit and non-profit colleges and universities whose main campus or headquarters is located outside the state of Alabama.

Twenty four (24) non-resident, non-profit and proprietary institutions/corporations were licensed by the Alabama State Department of Education to operate during calendar year 2000. Six (6) of the licensed institutions have no physical sites in the state but solicit students for out-of-state programs through agents. The remainder offered programs at 27 locations throughout Alabama.

Of the 18 institutions/corporations operating at physical sites, 11 were reviewed in accord with ACHE criteria and approved to offer programs at 19 locations. The remaining 7, operating at 8 sites throughout the state, were exempt from Commission review for reasons of Alabama incorporation, program duration or purpose of offering, such as those offered by business for employees.

The Commission's review criteria and procedures are designed to measure the quality of the offerings at each site through an evaluation of curriculum, attendance policies, admission requirements, faculty qualifications, administrative procedures, placement rate of graduates and the marketing of programs. Reviews are conducted annually and include a site visit. All programs approved by the Commission for continuation during this year were accredited by regional or national accrediting agencies. For information on the operational procedures of this program, see the link to Non-Resident Institutional Review on the Commission's web site at www.ache.state.al.us

Faculty Database

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Act 96-771 requires the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) ...to establish a uniform electronic faculty unit record system for the purpose of obtaining information on faculty work loads at two-year and four-year public

PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Information Advisory Group (HEIAG) steering committee has been recognized as the advisory committee referenced in Act 96-771. This group is charged with the responsibility to provide consultation and advice on database development and report generation for this project. It includes representatives from two-year and four-year public institutions and the Department of Postsecondary education. Other participants in this process include Faculty Senate and Council of Academic Officers for the four-year institutions and Instructional Officers organization for the two-year institutions.

ACTIVITIES

HEIAG committee and Commission staff are in the final stages of determining the data elements, definitions and file layout for the faculty database. It is the goal of the Commission to have elements defined and a pilot collection of data to begin after January 2001, with pilot data available for testing by June or July of 2001.

The proposal includes elements necessary to provide comparisons with national teaching load data through the Delaware Study (Michael Middaugh) and regional comparisons through Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). SREB has been involved in a faculty teaching load pilot for two years and data for the region is not yet available. The SREB and Delaware studies are basically similar and they are the basis of the proposal at this point. The Delaware study does not include data for two-year institutions but SREB will if the pilot survey advances to a regular survey.

It is unknown at this time when reports will be submitted from the database. The pilot data will be tested and analyzed during the Summer of 2001 and a recommendation will be made at that time for further implementation concerning data elements and report layouts.

Student Database

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Act 96-509 requires the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) "...to obtain specific information from each two-year and four-year public institution of higher education to establish a student unit record data system." It requires generation of at least four reports: High School report, Out-of-State Students report, Student Transfer report and a report on Retention and Graduation.

PARTICIPANTS

The Higher Education Information Advisory Group (HEIAG) Steering Committee has been recognized as the advisory committee referenced in ***Act 96-509***. It includes representatives from 2-year and 4-year public institutions. Other participants working on this project have included staff from ACHE, the Department of Postsecondary Education and the State Department of Education.

ACTIVITIES

Activities during the past year:

1) All two-year and four-year public institutions submitted production data on their students for Summer 1999, Fall 1999, Winter 2000 and Spring 2000 terms. The Statewide Student Database contains a combined total of approximately 1 million student records submitted during the past two years.
2) An average of 99.9% of all student records received from the institutions were acceptable and have been included in the Statewide Student Database.
3) All information regarding this project is posted on ACHE's web site at www.ache.state.al.us.
4) Two High School Reports were generated and sent to Dr. Richardson at

the State Department of Education using 1998-1999 student information. Another High School Report has been released to Dr. Richardson using 1999-2000 student data.

5) The Tuition and Residency Report was released using Fall 1999-2000 data providing information on Out-of-State Students.
6) The first Transfer/Migration report was generated and released to the institutions.
7) A Cohort Cross-Match process was implemented to allow institutions an efficient way to monitor their cohort students electronically.
8) A Clean-up process was implemented to allow institutions to clean-up data that was reported incorrectly.
9) A workshop was held in Montgomery with institutional representatives during June.
10) The first two Ad-Hoc Reports were generated using data from the Statewide Student Database.
11) Staff is currently processing the first completions data submitted for the Student Database.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

1) The first High School Report that monitors the enrollment of high school seniors in a public higher education institution in Alabama at any time during the first two years after high school graduation will be sent to Dr. Richardson during October 2000.
2) Processing of Summer term data will be completed during December 2000.
3) The deadline for submission of Fall 2000-2001 data is February 15, 2001.
4) The first Retention/Graduation report is anticipated to be generated during 2004 after six years of data has been gathered and analyzed.

Network of Alabama Academic Libraries

The much anticipated "new millennium" was heralded with great fanfare, and this celebration was especially appropriate in Alabama. The Alabama education community welcomed the new millennium with the creation of the Alabama Virtual Library. This totally new concept in the delivery of library services online represented the first unified education project supported unanimously by all education sectors in Alabama. Funding for the Alabama Virtual Library certainly gave good cause for celebration. It truly meant a new millennium for improving the quality of education statewide.

The Network of Alabama Academic Libraries is justifiably proud of its leadership role to conceive this important program and its success in forging the partnerships necessary to create a viable statewide online library. The Alabama Virtual Library, implemented in FY2000, assures every citizen and every K-12, college, and university student with access to accurate, scholarly information needed for lifelong learning and instruction. This outstanding library is available for every Alabamian at the touch of a finger on a networked PC at www.avl.lib.al.us.

An annual state appropriation enables the partnership of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Alabama Department of Education, Alabama

Department of Postsecondary Education, Alabama Supercomputer Authority, and Alabama Public Library Service to provide fifty-two online information databases for NAAL members, K-12 public school systems, public two-year colleges, and public libraries. Two NAAL representatives, Dr. Stella Bentley, Auburn University, and Dr. Janice Franklin, Alabama State University, along with Dr. Hank Hector, Alabama Commission on Higher Education, represent higher education on the fifteen-member AVL governing council. During the past year, they gave untold hours and exceptional expertise to resolve policy, planning, and implementation issues for this new and innovative statewide education program.

The AVL Database Negotiating Team, chaired by another NAAL representative, Dr. Jerry W. Stephens, University of Alabama at Birmingham, achieved significant discounts in the cost of the databases as well as favorable contractual agreements for access, copyright, training, support, and license renewals. Critical components of every AVL contract prohibit advertising and assure privacy rights of Alabamians using the databases. As a result of the Team's efforts, the AVL provides a wide array of core information to support the curriculum from the earliest elementary grades through the undergraduate college experience. The AVL also includes important bibliographic tools that enable upper-division students and scholars identify and locate unique and hard-to-find research materials as well as professional education resources to assist teachers.

Because NAAL members have had longer experience with online databases than other participants in the AVL, each pledged support for training K-12 teachers and school media specialists. Reference and bibliographic instruction librarians in every NAAL member contacted public schools in their service areas to provide training programs that would help assure effective use of the AVL information in the public school curriculum. Many also offered training sessions in campus computer labs. These were open to teachers as well as the general public. Many hours of AVL training were provided by the NAAL members throughout last year, and these programs are continuing to assure that all teachers and students will make effective use of the exceptional library resources available to them.

The academic institutions that form NAAL have been critical to the dramatic success of the AVL. The generosity of spirit that has been NAAL's trademark is evident in NAAL's contributions for the AVL.

AVL databases provide information resources supporting core academic programs offered by Alabama's institutions of higher education. However, to support graduate education and research, NAAL members must provide information beyond the initial scope of the AVL. An aggressive NAAL Online Content Program negotiates statewide licenses for databases needed for upper level study and research. This program achieves savings for members and increases access to online information that might otherwise be unaffordable for many NAAL members. Each member pays its own share of the cost of the group license, but each saves significantly over the retail cost of the database. For example, NAAL licenses for twenty-seven databases cost participants a total of $1,045,399. If the members licensed these individually at retail cost, the total cost would be $2,084,922. NAAL is extremely proud that the Online Content Program has saved $1,039,523 this year. NAAL is even prouder that Alabama's college students benefit

from the exceptional quality of the library resources provided for their education.

NAAL's mission to strengthen library resources supporting graduate education and research is also advanced by its subsidy for three databases needed for academic programs offered by all NAAL members. These databases, *Expanded Academic ASAP* (an index with full text of over 1,000 journals), the Modern Language Association's *International Bibliography* and the American Psychological Association's *PsycInfo*, support liberal arts and social sciences academic programs. These programs are among those meeting the state-mandated Viability Standards. The NAAL subsidy assures that all students in its member institutions have core information essential for their instruction. By helping make these databases "affordable" for its members, NAAL adds upper division resources to the core resources provided by AVL.

Although the work of NAAL has helped members provide some information resources for graduate education and advanced research, Alabama institutions critically need to add research databases in scientific and technical fields as well as professional fields such as business, engineering, allied health, and medicine. NAAL would like to include advanced information resources such as *ABI/Inform* and *Biological Abstracts* among the subsidized databases. Even with group discounts, such databases rank among the most expensive and are often beyond the financial capabilities of NAAL members. Because advanced education and research have been proven to fuel economic growth, it is essential that funding be found to add information that will enable academic institutions to partner with other organizations to support economic development as well as improve the quality of life for Alabamians.

Since its creation in 1984, NAAL has supported efforts to assure that every student and faculty member have access to the total academic resources of its members, regardless of the location of the library user or the material. All NAAL members lend their circulating materials to each other without restriction or cost. In FY2000, NAAL members lent each other more than 12,000 books and transmitted copies for 22,400 journal articles. NAAL provides a package delivery service to deliver requested original items quickly. In addition, a multi-year grant program assisted members with the addition of an Internet-based workstation to transmit copied materials electronically—usually on the same day they were requested.

The Network of Alabama is an exemplary model for statewide cooperation to strengthen education. Alabama's academic institutions can be proud of their acumen in creating NAAL, for their stanch support of collaborative innovation, and for their success through NAAL in improving the quality of education for Alabama's graduate students and faculty.

Report on SREB Activities

The Electronic Campus of the Southern Regional Education Board

The Electronic Campus (EC), begun in 1998, is a project of the Southern Regional Education Board and its member states. The purpose of the project is to provide students with a central point of reference for distance education courses and programs. The EC give students easier access to quality programs and courses at two-year and four-year institutions throughout the south.

Colleges and universities that participate in the Electronic Campus are required to establish and maintain a web page describing their participation in the EC, listing approved programs and courses, and providing links to information for prospective students. All institutions that participate in the Electronic Campus must be accredited.

The Commission staff is the approval authority for all offerings (courses and programs) submitted for the Electronic Campus (EC) by Alabama higher education institutions. The staff reviews submissions from public institutions. In the case of private institutions, the staff works with a panel of representatives from private institutions in reviewing and approving course and program offerings. In the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the staff reviewed and approved over 200 new courses for inclusion in the Electronic Campus, as well as nine new programs. Three of the nine programs were included in a joint project of the Academic Common Market and Electronic Campus, discussed below.

The Distance Learning Policy Laboratory

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) represents the state of Alabama in the project with the Southern Regional Education Board that established the Distance Learning Policy Laboratory. Building upon the work of the SREB Educational Technology Cooperative and the Electronic Campus, the Policy Laboratory seeks to reduce or eliminate existing or potential policy barriers to distance learning activities.

The Commission staff conducted several activities related to the Policy Laboratory in the past year. Alabama has taken a lead in participation in the Academic Common Market/ Electronic Campus pilot project. This initiative focuses on expanding distance learning opportunities to pursue certified degree programs via distance learning by removing out-of-state tuition barriers. Participating institutions offer their Electronic Campus programs at the in-state rate to qualified students. Alabama institutions nominated nine programs for inclusion in the project. Eventually, three of these programs were offered in the pilot project.

In March 2000, members of the Commission staff made presentations at the Troy State University Technology symposium regarding developments in distance education. One session specifically addressed the progress and the review process for the Electronic Campus and the goals of the Policy Laboratory.

Members of the Commission staff have served on a number of committees related to the EC and the SREB Educational Technology Cooperative. These staff members also are participating in Policy Lab committees that will address barriers in distance education.

The SREB Distance Learning Policy Laboratory is supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education's (FIPSE) Learning Anytime, Anywhere Partnerships (LAAP) grant and by a matching grant from the Stranahan Foundation.

The Academic Common Market (ACM)

The ACM is an agreement that enables students to pursue unique majors offered at public institutions in the other SREB states while paying in-state tuition. Savings to both states and students are significant. The state saves because the Common Market provides costly, specialized programs that otherwise would have to be duplicated. For 1999-2000 academic year, ACHE certified 106 students to participate in the ACM. These students were enrolled in baccalaureate, Master's and doctoral programs that were offered in 14 states.

ACHE/SREB Minority Doctoral Scholars Program

The 1999-2000 Academic Year was the seventh year that ACHE has participated in the Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) Minority Doctoral Scholars Program. Thirty-one scholars matriculated at AU, UA, UAB, and Troy State University. Of the 31, scholars, 25 were regular doctoral students while six were dissertation year students. In addition, six completed all requirements for their doctorates.

Alabama is part of a National Compact for Faculty Diversity. More than 23 states are part of this compact which is designed to add 400 minorities to faculties at institutions where they are underrepresented.

Alabama continues to be one of the leading supporters of the SREB program, which includes 14 of 16 states in the Southeastern Region. Of the 14 states, Alabama and 10 other states directly support the program. In addition, Alabama (41) was ranked second last year to Virginia (44) in the number of scholars served.

SREB Contract Programs

The regional contract-for service program was established 50 years ago when states decided to seek available openings for students in professional programs at out-of-of state institutions. The purpose was to lower health care training costs significantly by avoiding the prohibitive start-up or expansion costs associated with training facilities.

Alabama residents participate in two programs that are described below.

MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE

Meharry Medical College annually reserves 59 slots for students from Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Three Georgia universities, Emory, Mercer and Morehouse provide 416 contract spaces in their medical schools for students from Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

For Academic Year 1999-2000, the ACHE staff certified 16 SREB contract students who enrolled in medicine (12), and dentistry (4) at Meharry Medical College. These numbers are similar to the certification numbers of the past three years.

A review of the student records indicate that last year's participants were recent college graduates from, Alabama State, UA, UAB, Oakwood, Fisk, Fort Valley, Morehouse, Stillman Tennessee State, and Xavier.

OSTEOPATHIC

The contract with the West Virginia School for Osteopathic (WVSOM) provides some assistance to the state in training doctors for rural areas. Students certified by the ACHE staff are able to reduce their expenses by 50 percent. This reduction is a result of the contractual agreement that permits Alabama residents to enroll at the in-state tuition rate of $12,500 instead of $25,000.

During the Academic Year 2000-2001, WVSOM will phase out its SREB contract with Alabama. However, beginning in 2001-2002, the Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic (NSUCOM) has agreed to accept the four Alabama residents that can be supported by the ACHE/SREB contract.

Unlike Meharry Medical College students, most of the osteopathic students enter their program with years of varied experiences. According to WVSOM officials, this has enabled students to graduate on time and without much difficulty. A review of the student information report indicates that more recent Alabama WVSOM students have served as Anesthetist, Pharmacist, Research Assistant in Microbiology, and Computer Systems Analyst.

Commission Overview

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education was created by the Legislature in 1969 to coordinate public higher education in Alabama. The Commission is comprised of 12 members: 10 appointed by the Governor, one by the Speaker of the House and one by the Lieutenant Governor. Commissioners are subject to Senate confirmation. They serve staggered nine-year terms without compensation.

In addition to the Commission, higher education governance in Alabama is made up of several boards. Two multi-campus governing boards were established by the constitution for the three University of Alabama campuses and the two Auburn University campuses. One board of trustees governs the three Troy State University campuses, while the seven other state universities have separate governing boards. Athens State College and the public two-year sector are governed by the State Board of Education.

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Highlights of Financial Aid Activities

State spending on need-based student aid for 1999-2000 was $215,500 less than in 1998-99. According to data compiled by the National Association of State Grant and Aid Programs,only 2.5% of Alabama's full-time undergraduates received grant awards (state-sponsored grant aid) in 1998-99, the latest year for which comparative data are available. The national median is 14%.

The estimated grant dollars per full-time undergraduate enrollment in Alabama was $15. The national median was $247.

Clearly, Alabama ranks in the lower tier of states providing assistance to students pursuing higher education in the state.

Review of Programs

ALABAMA NATIONAL GUARD EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This program is designed to help professional members of the Alabama National Guard pursue undergraduate degrees and, to a limited extent, graduate degrees. This assistance is especially important as a component of the Military Department's recruitment efforts to maintain troop strength in Alabama.

During 1999-2000, 952 awards were given at an average of $702 per award for a total distribution of $668,162.

Current law restricts award payments to no more than $500 per term and $1,000 per year. Because average tuition and fees now exceed these limits, the Commission supports legislation that would raise or eliminate these restrictions.

ALABAMA STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Alabama Student Assistance Program is a state-supported and federally-funded grant program which is designed to assist financially-needy students. It is the state's only need-based student aid program for Alabama residents attending postsecondary educational institutions in Alabama.

During 1999-2000, 3,931 awards were given at an average of $466 and a total distribution of $1,830,550.

ALABAMA STUDENT GRANT PROGRAM

Alabama residents enrolled in independent, nonprofit Alabama colleges and universities receive financial assistance through the Alabama Student Grant Program. This program helps bridge the differential between public and private institutions, and helps provide Alabama students an opportunity to take programs and courses at private institutions. Individual grant payments to students are significantly less than the state appropriation per student were these residents to attend public institutions in Alabama.

A strategy defined in **Enhancing Our Strengths Through a Shared Vision**,

calls for the Legislature to fund the tuition assistance program for students attending private institutions of higher education at its maximum level. Alabama law allows eligible students at private higher education institutions to receive $1,200 per academic year.

The state of Alabama is not unique in providing assistance for students attending private institutions. Most states include private higher education in the student aid subsidy programs; and one-third of all states offer direct tuition equalization grants (student grants that offset the cost differences between public and private colleges) to students attending private institutions.

During 1999-2000, 9,513 awards were given at an average of $583 each. Award distribution totaled $5,613,888.

POLICE OFFICER'S AND FIREFIGHTER'S SURVIVOR'S EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Police Officer's and Firefighter's Survivor's Educational Assistance Program provides funds for tuition, fees, books and supply expenses for undergraduate study at Alabama public colleges and universities for dependents and spouses of police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty.

During 1999-2000, 17 awards were given at an average of $2,475 per award, for a total distribution of $42,079.

STATE OF ALABAMA CHIROPRACTIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This program provides scholarship assistance to financially needy Alabama residents who are enrolled in accredited chiropractic colleges. It is the only type of assistance for Alabama students pursuing chiropractic studies.

During 1999-2000, 26 awards were given at an average of $1,461, for a total distribution of $37,986.

TECHNOLOGY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR ALABAMA TEACHERS

The Technology Scholarship Program for Alabama Teachers (TSPAT) is the first program of its type in the country. The program, created by the Alabama Legislature in 1993, enables certified, public school teachers to take advanced technology training on state-paid scholarships. Teachers take three courses specifically designed to help teachers integrate technology into the school curriculum.

To date, nearly 12% of all public school teachers in Alabama have received technology training with TSPAT assistance. During 1999-2000, 854 awards were given to K-12 teachers at an average award of $752. Awards totaled $641,902.

ALABAMA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

2001 Meeting Schedule

Thursday and Friday, February 22-23, 2001
University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham

Thursday and Friday, May 17-18, 2001
The Legends, Prattville

Thursday and Friday, August 9-10, 2001
RSA Union Building, Montgomery

Thursday and Friday, October 11-12, 2001
University of South Alabama, Mobile

Thursday and Friday, December 13-14, 2001
RSA Union Building, Montgomery

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